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## Rally protests GOP Social Security plan

**Corzine tells crowd program can be fixed "without changing the basic concept."**

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**By TERRENCE DOPP**  
The Express-Times

TRENTON -- Congressional Democrats and about 100 union supporters rallied Thursday at the State House to protest President Bush's plan to privatize Social Security.

The Bush initiative would allow younger workers to voluntarily invest some of their Social Security money into stock market accounts in exchange for lesser benefits upon retirement. It would be the most sweeping change in the program's 70-year history.

Opponents, including U.S. Sen. Jon Corzine, D-N.J., and congressmen Rob Andrews, D-Camden, and Rush Holt, D-Mercer/Hunterdon, said the result would be reduced benefits for all retirees.

"The reality is that right now the overwhelming majority of Americans say no to private accounts," said Corzine. "There are plenty of fixes without changing the basic concept."

Corzine has accused Vice President Cheney of having "a virtual career of disdain for Social Security."

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The program, which covers retirees, disabled workers and widowed spouses, uses contributions from current workers to fund benefits to recipients.

Republican backers of Bush's plan contend Social Security will begin paying out more in benefits than it receives in contributions by 2018, and the master fund will go bust in 2041. To counteract the anticipated deficit, Bush wants to allow younger workers to divert one-third of their payroll taxes into private investment accounts.

Opponents, primarily Democrats, call the claims false. Democrats said Thursday a recent report by the Congressional Budget Office details how the Social Security Trust Fund will not run out of money until 2052.

"Social Security is probably the most successful program in the history of this country. It keeps millions out of poverty and it puts food on the table," Holt told the crowd, which included members of the Teamsters, AFL-CIO and other labor groups.

"Social Security is important, especially for people who think they will never

need it," he said. "There are 45 million Americans who now need it, and we should not tamper with it."

Democratic criticism came the day after Bush warned Democrats they need to compromise on the overhaul plan. Terrence Dopp is Trenton correspondent for The Express-Times. He can be reached at 609-292-5154 or by e-mail at [tdopp@sjnewsco.com](mailto:tdopp@sjnewsco.com).